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Libyan Opposition Groups: Much Sound, Little Fury

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A Research Paper

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May 1987*

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Libyan Opposition Groups: Much Sound, Little Fury

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [] the
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,
with a contribution by [] the Office
of Leadership Analysis. It was coordinated with the
Directorate of Operations. []

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, NESA,

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Libyan Opposition Groups:
Much Sound, Little Fury

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 1 May 1987
was used in this report.*

Opposition to the regime of Mu'ammar Qadhafi is at its highest level since he seized power in 1969. Qadhafi has alienated key groups in Libya—particularly the officer corps—and driven many Libyans into exile. Although Qadhafi's exposure to antiregime activity by these groups has increased, he has managed to keep them divided and to check real or potential threats through ruthless and pervasive security measures. Excluding the possibility of a "lone assassin" killing the Libyan leader, at this time only sustained opposition activity inside Libya could destabilize Qadhafi's regime.

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The military is the only force inside Libya with the capability to topple Qadhafi. The officer corps generally is opposed to Qadhafi, and many senior officers would support a change in regime.

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The officer corps could make common cause with pragmatic elements of Qadhafi's own tribe, which may regard his elimination as necessary to preserve the dominance of the Qadhafa tribe. Nonetheless, to succeed in ousting Qadhafi, potential coup plotters would have to be exceedingly secure and disciplined, and at least a little lucky.

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Most of the approximately 50,000 Libyans living abroad—about 1.5 percent of the population—probably are dissatisfied with Qadhafi's regime. Only about 10 percent, however, are active participants in the 20 or so dissident groups that have surfaced.

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Despite some initial successes in focusing international attention on Qadhafi's repression, the Libyan opposition in exile has not been effective. Although dissident propaganda probably has succeeded in increasing Qadhafi's obsession with personal security, after several years of activity the exiles have not acquired a sizable following inside Libya.

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The largest and most prominent of the exile organizations is the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL). The NFSL, which claims a hardcore membership of about 1,000, has conducted propaganda operations against the regime and is the only exile group known to have mounted a paramilitary operation inside Libya—an attempted assassination of Qadhafi in May 1984. The NFSL has lost momentum since 1985, apparently because of a lack of will. More recently it appears to have confined its activities to propaganda.

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Other exile groups and figures, such as Bashir al-Rabti's Libyan National Party or former Prime Minister Abd al-Hamid al-Bakkush, are capable of propaganda operations but are more likely to divide the opposition than to become a serious threat to the regime. A possible exception may be former Libyan Foreign Minister Abd al-Mun'im al-Huni, a prominent exile who has maintained contact with some senior Libyan officials. []

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All of the opposition groups abroad depend heavily on foreign support, primarily from Iraq, Egypt, and Algeria. This dependence seriously weakens the opposition, as their resources are often hostage to the state of relations between Qadhafi and other Arab states. The abandonment of the opposition by Morocco in 1984 and the fall of the anti-Qadhafi Nimeiri regime in Sudan the following year were especially damaging to the opposition and underscore this vulnerability. []

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If present trends continue, the exile opposition is likely to become irrelevant to the security of the regime. With greater activity and will, however, the opposition could reverse this trend. Even then the exiles by themselves probably cannot oust Qadhafi, but they could help foster coup plotting. There are several ways this could evolve:

- The exiles might work toward greater unity—perhaps forming a government-in-exile—and concentrate on propaganda activities abroad against the Libyan regime. To the extent the exiles diminish Qadhafi's prestige and appeal, they would advance US interests. Such activities might allow them to play a role in a post-Qadhafi succession.
- The exiles could work to build a network of cells and penetrations in Libya to support a paramilitary program.
- Huni, working with the Algerians and/or Egyptians, may be able to galvanize opposition in the officer corps to move against Qadhafi. The extent of his influence in the Army and security services, however, remains undemonstrated. []

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The greatest shortcoming of the exiles has been their failure to act at crucial times—such as during regime infighting in the fall of 1985 or in the immediate aftermath of the US airstrikes in 1986. The failure of the exiles to exploit effectively these internal crises makes them more an irritant than a serious threat to the regime. Another crisis has resulted from the collapse of the Libyan Army in Chad, although it remains to be seen whether the exiles will seize this opportunity to strike at the regime. []

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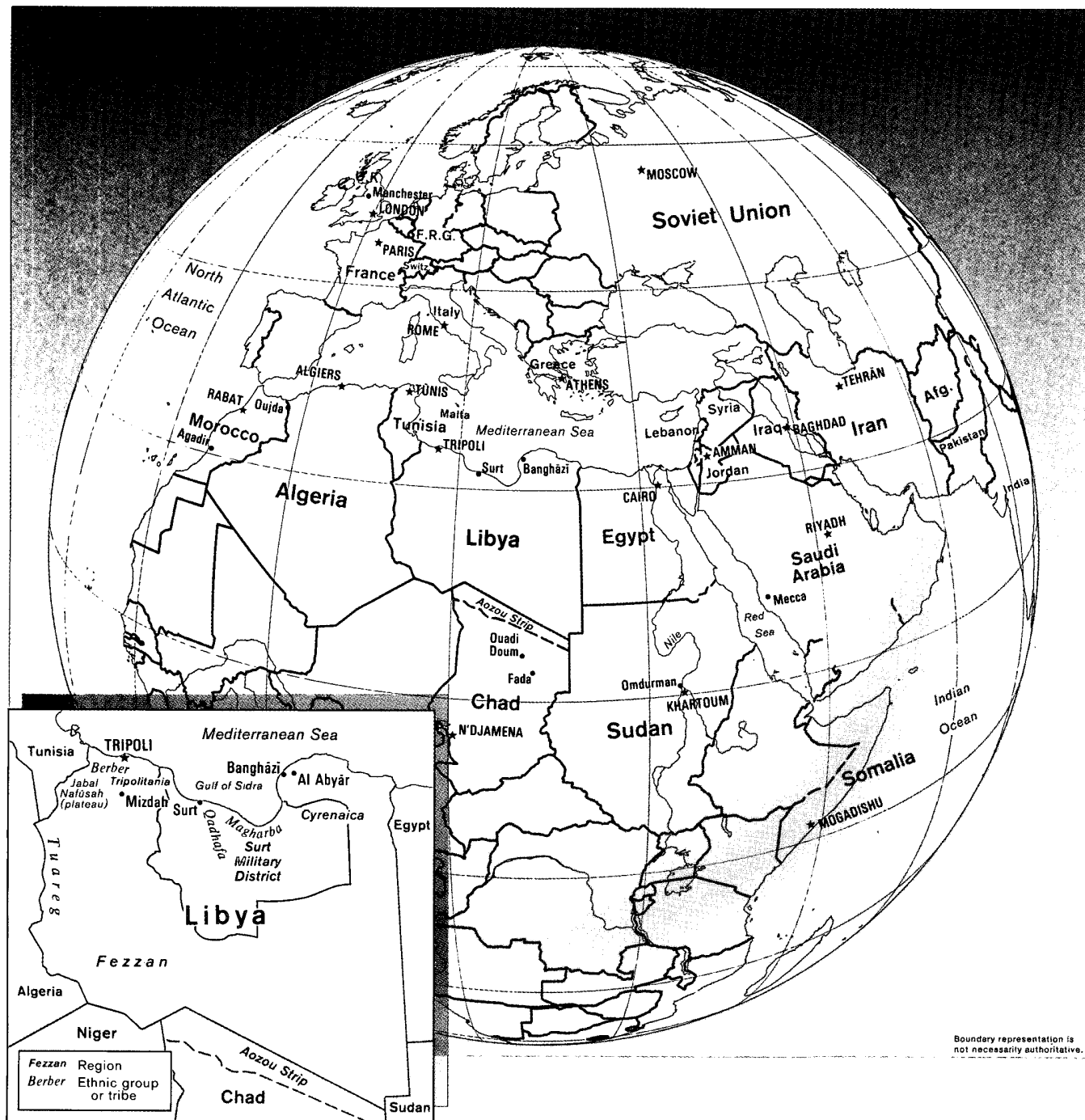
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Figure 1



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Libyan Opposition Groups: Much Sound, Little Fury

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After then Capt. Mu'ammar Qadhafi toppled the corrupt and discredited Sanussi monarchy in Libya in 1969 with a handful of young military officers, his regime enjoyed broad popular support. Under Qadhafi's leadership the Libyan Government eliminated many of the abuses of the monarchy, expanded educational, economic, and administrative opportunities for the Libyan middle class, and took a more nationalist and nonaligned posture in international affairs. Beginning in the mid-1970s, however, Qadhafi increasingly dictated Libyan policy according to his own ideology. Economic mismanagement, foreign adventures, and growing government repression became the order of the day, turning an increasing share of the Libyan population, including influential interest groups such as the military officer corps, against the regime.

According to open sources, there are now about 50,000 Libyans—roughly 1.5 percent of the population—living abroad. Most of these expatriates are dissatisfied with Qadhafi's regime, but they do not participate in any of the 20 or so dissident groups claiming to be active. In addition, the expatriate community is divided by a number of differing social and political interests that hinder exile unity.

The Expatriate Community

Former Royalists

The first segment of the population to go into exile were members of the old Libyan elite closely associated with the monarchy. Besides members of the royal family such as Prince Abdallah al-Sanussi, this group includes politicians such as former Prime Ministers Abd al-Hamid al-Bakkush and Mustafa bin Halim as well as some wealthy businessmen who made their fortunes before 1969. Press statements indicate that most of these exiles share a conservative, Western-oriented outlook, although some, such as Bakkush, frequently accuse the United States of supporting Qadhafi—in part to tarnish Qadhafi's nationalist

credentials. Many of these individuals advocate a return to a capitalist economy in Libya, although few hope to restore the monarchy.

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Most of the royalist exiles are discredited by their association with the monarchy. Even though they command little support either inside or outside Libya, their wealth and/or personal contacts in the Arab world allow some to play important roles in the opposition. Bakkush, for example, is a vocal anti-Qadhafi propagandist. Press reports say Halim served in the early 1980s as an intermediary between the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL)—the largest exile organization—and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia.

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The "Old Opposition"

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A small element of the Libyan expatriate community is made up of the old leftist opponents of the monarchy from the 1960s. These exiles—intellectuals, former labor agitators, and political gadflies—range from strict socialist Ba'thists to moderate social democrats. Many of these old oppositionists originally supported Qadhafi but later turned against him as their visions of republican Libya differed. For example, Mahmud Maghrabi—founder of an early dissident group, the National Grouping—served as Qadhafi's first Prime Minister in 1969.

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Members of the "old opposition" were the first to begin organizational and propaganda activities against Qadhafi in the late 1970s, but they could not broaden their support beyond their original ideological constituencies or overcome their personal and intellectual differences. Divided and unwilling or incapable of taking practical action against Qadhafi, they remain a collection of coffeehouse plotters and aging leftists who we believe are out of touch with the concerns of most Libyans today.

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The Middle Class

Middle-class Libyans—professionals, merchants, and businessmen—driven out of Libya by Qadhafi's persecution of the bourgeoisie and economic hardship, form what we believe is the largest segment of the expatriate community. Middle-class exiles provide much of the organizational and financial resources of the Libyan opposition. Unlike the less numerous royalists or old opposition, the middle class is an amorphous group that shares an antipathy for Qadhafi but lacks a clearly defined ideology beyond a desire for a stable, nonaligned regime in Libya. In our view, the failure of both the royalists and the old opposition to recognize the nonideological orientation of the middle class is in large part responsible for their inability to gain the allegiance of this element of the opposition. [REDACTED]

Students

[REDACTED] press reports suggest that Libya's traditionally politically active student population opposes revolutionary committee control of the universities and shares the general population's grievances against the regime. We believe many students active in the opposition are also Islamic activists. The students are important in part because so many of them study overseas (over 3,000 in the United States alone). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Internal Opposition

Sabotage and other incidents since 1983 suggest at least a rudimentary resistance network exists in Libya. In the spring of 1985 groups claiming to oppose Qadhafi were in contact with a foreign embassy in Tripoli. Many exile groups claim to have adherents in Libya, but we believe most of these claims are exaggerated or specious. Even the NFSL has only a general idea of the number of its partisans inside Libya. [REDACTED] Given the pervasive Libyan security apparatus, most clandestine resistance activity almost certainly is loosely organized and relies on informal tribal, family, or professional ties. [REDACTED]



Antiregime protest by General Union of Libyan Students [REDACTED]

The Armed Forces

We believe the Libyan officer corps poses the most serious threat to Qadhafi's regime. Qadhafi's radical policies and the country's worsening economic situation have undermined the privileged lifestyle of the officers, and the growing influence of the revolutionary committees has eroded the political influence of the Army. [REDACTED] the officer corps is generally opposed to Qadhafi and that senior officers would support a change of regime—although few are willing to initiate that change. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Sources of Discontent

Political Extremism. We believe that Qadhafi's ruthless enforcement of his radical policies is a key factor motivating active opposition to him. The first significant opposition to Qadhafi emerged in the late 1970s, when Libyan oil revenues were still rising. This suggests that political grievances were the root cause of the emergence of Libyan opposition to Qadhafi, although declining economic conditions in the 1980s have accelerated Qadhafi's loss of popular support. Following an attempted coup by senior military officers in 1975, the influence of the officer corps was curtailed as Qadhafi sidelined the remaining moderate officers on the ruling Revolutionary Command Council and turned to his relatives, fellow tribesmen, and ideological radicals for support. Student opposition to the regime erupted in Benghazi in 1976 and was brutally crushed. Since then Qadhafi occasionally has hanged a few "counterrevolutionary" or "bourgeois" students on the 7 April anniversary of the event. []

When Qadhafi dissolved the Libyan republic in favor of a jamahiriya (state of the masses) in 1978, professional civil servants and technocrats found their role diminished by revolutionary committees dominated by young, pro-Qadhafi extremists. Other measures, such as the seizure of second homes and the nationalization of small businesses struck at the well-being of middle-class Libyans, who had prospered during Qadhafi's first decade. At this time a growing number of Libyans began "voting with their feet," and the Libyan expatriate community swelled. []

Economic Problems. Qadhafi's political problems have been compounded by economic mismanagement and since 1981 by falling oil revenues caused by a soft international oil market. Since 1981 per capita income has dropped 30 percent, and the country's economic output in 1986 slipped to its lowest level in six years. Consumer goods are rationed and often unavailable, while spending cuts have made food, water, and electricity shortages a way of life. []

[] Libyans are restless over economic problems, particularly food shortages, and have become increasingly vocal in their criticism of the regime. []

[]

Foreign Policy Problems. Libyan radicalism abroad has generated opposition. We believe most Libyans dislike the diplomatic isolation and military defeats that Qadhafi's adventures have brought to Libya, and many fault Qadhafi's largess to foreign revolutionaries when economic problems have forced austerity at home. At present the foreign policies that are generating the most discontent in Libya include:

- Chad. Libya's occupation of northern Chad was not popular with either the armed forces or the public.

[] the increased fighting in northern Chad that began in December 1986 led to concern among the general public and increased military desertions. The humiliating Libyan defeats at Fada and Ouadi Doum this year almost certainly will lead to renewed plotting in the officer corps, especially if Libya is forced to give up the Aozou Strip, which it unilaterally annexed in 1973.

- Iran. [] Libyan support for the Iranian war effort against Iraq has led to dissension among some military officers. Qadhafi's frequent efforts to justify his support for Iran suggest that his policy is unpopular with the Libyan public as well. Press reports suggest that Qadhafi is belatedly putting distance between Libya and Iran.

- Soviet Union. We believe the large Soviet and East European presence in Libya offends nationalist sentiment and is unpopular in Libya. []

[] Failure of the Soviets to prevent the US airstrikes on Libya in 1986 and the perceived inferiority of the Soviet equipment to US weapons may have further influenced the officer corps' perception of the value of Tripoli's ties to Moscow. []

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More recently, Qadhafi's foreign adventurism has led to disturbances in the armed forces. Diplomatic [] sources say there was unrest among Libyan military units following the US airstrikes in April 1986. []

fundamentalist dissidents was arrested in Banghazi and later executed for the murder of a revolutionary committee official. We believe that many Libyan fundamentalists—like those in Tunisia and elsewhere in the Middle East—are from the disinherited middle class. []

Berbers

In our view, the only other element inside Libya that may be of concern to the regime is the Berber ethnic minority of northwest Libya. (A separate Berber group, the Tuaregs of southwest Libya, has exhibited no signs of disloyalty.) The Berbers are an indigenous, non-Arab group numbering about 100,000 that reside in the hilly Jabal Nafusah that runs from the Tunisian border to the area south of Tripoli. They are differentiated from the dominant Arabs of Libya by language and their adherence to the Ibadi form of Islam—most Libyan Arabs are Sunni Muslims of the Maliki rite. According to open sources, the Berber community traditionally has given more allegiance to local tribal groups than it has to the central government. We believe the Berbers are particularly opposed to Qadhafi's efforts to impose the Arabic language and to bring their traditional farmlands under government control. []

The Berbers probably are cooperating with the exiles. Following the shootout in Tripoli on 8 May 1984 between NFSL commandos and Libyan security forces, there were arrests and hangings of Berbers in the Jabal Nafusah. []

Despite his problems with the officers, Qadhafi's pervasive security measures make him difficult to reach. He changes residence continually, moves officers from post to post, and has introduced revolutionary committees into the armed services as watchdogs against military plotting. []

[] Qadhafi's security measures have made most officers resigned to continued domination by Qadhafi and unwilling to risk antiregime activity. Nonetheless, we believe the record of past coup attempts and Qadhafi's continued attack on the armed forces' prestige, influence, and professionalism ensure that the armed forces will remain a threat to the regime. We believe the humiliating collapse of the Libyan campaign in Chad is the kind of event that will embolden disaffected officers to challenge the regime. []

Islamic Fundamentalists

[] many Libyans are attracted to fundamentalist religious sentiments similar to those being asserted in Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt. Moreover, Qadhafi has attacked the power of the traditional religious elite by confiscating religious endowments, closing Islamic schools, instituting policies such as military service for women, and making public statements maintaining the separation of politics from religion. Qadhafi, who has accused his opposition of being members of the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, faced some resistance from the Libyan religious establishment as early as 1974. []

[] In August 1986 a ring of

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The Exile Organizations

We believe that most of the approximately 20 Libyan organizations opposed to Qadhafi represent little more than a letterhead and have a negligible following among exiles, let alone inside Libya. In our judgment, only two exile organizations and one individual are serious opponents of Qadhafi. All have the potential to contribute to instability in Libya, but they also have weaknesses that probably will prevent them from realizing their potential. []

The National Front for the Salvation of Libya

The NFSL, founded in Khartoum by Muhammad al-Maqaryaf in October 1981, is the largest and best organized of the exile groups. It is the only opposition group with a sizable following and the only one to have attempted a limited paramilitary operation inside Libya. In our view, the NFSL is the Libyan exile organization with the greatest potential to contribute to the creation of a climate conducive to a coup attempt. We do not believe, however, that the Front has sufficient popular support to take power and dominate a post-Qadhafi government. []

Organization and Objectives. Maqaryaf is the secretary general of the NFSL and its real leader. The NFSL has developed a rudimentary bureaucracy to administer its various programs, which include propaganda, the support and welfare of Libyan expatriates, and small paramilitary operations. The NFSL is active in countries where large numbers of Libyan exiles are present, including Egypt, West Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. []

The NFSL's immediate objective, as stated in its literature, is removing Qadhafi from power. Beyond this objective, however, the group's goals are nebulous. NFSL literature asserts that the group is committed to the establishment of a nonaligned democratic government in Libya. The NFSL "Founding Statement" includes references to a one-year provisional government to oversee the drafting of a new constitution and the election of a permanent government once Qadhafi is gone. Although the NFSL could prove to be a voice for moderation following Qadhafi's removal, the post-Qadhafi political environment in Libya is likely to be chaotic and hardly conducive to the establishment of democracy. []

Membership and Support. Recent reports on the size of the NFSL's membership are difficult to acquire, 25X1

[] In 1983 [] 25X1
[] the NFSL estimated its "hardcore" membership at over 1,000 and believed that it could count on almost 1,000 additional "active supporters." The NFSL estimated that it had another 3,000 sympathizers. In our view, these figures were optimistic at the time, but, allowing for growth because of the NFSL's comparative activism, the numbers are a reasonable estimate of the group's size today. [] 25X1

We believe the NFSL is a diverse coalition of middle-class elements, Islamic fundamentalists, students, and some former royalists. The middle class, by virtue of its wealth and numbers, probably dominates the NFSL, a judgment supported by its generally moderate, nonideological program. Nonetheless, press reporting suggests the fundamentalists are a major faction in the NFSL and probably exercise an influence greater than their numbers. [] 25X1
[] Maqaryaf has strong religious leanings and at one time belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. [] 25X1
Maqaryaf is an orthodox but not radical Muslim, but the perception of such radicalism—fed in part by regime propaganda—may limit the group's appeal among the more Westernized segments of the population. [] 25X1

The NFSL claims to have supporters from every major region of Libya except Qadhafi's tribal heartland of Surt. The backgrounds of the NFSL's known leadership suggest a balance among the three regions of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and Fezzan. Despite these efforts to appeal to a broad spectrum of Libyan society, a member of a rival exile group claims the NFSL is perceived by many Libyans to be dominated by Cyrenaicans. Maqaryaf is a Cyrenaican from a prominent family of the Magharba tribe, and [] 25X1
[] key positions in the NFSL 25X1
are held by Cyrenaicans. We believe the perception that the NFSL represents Cyrenaican interests hinders its ability to broaden its appeal and is a major obstacle to its ability to consolidate its power in Libya in the wake of Qadhafi's ouster. [] 25X1
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It is unclear whether the NFSL has managed to penetrate the armed forces. [redacted]

[redacted]
the group has a strong following in the Libyan bureaucracy but little support in the armed forces. On the other hand, the NFSL claims to have supporters among the officer corps and can point to former royalist Army officers such as Col. Aziz Umar Shunayb among its exile members. [redacted]

Propaganda and Paramilitary Programs. The NFSL's major antiregime effort is the dissemination of anti-Qadhafi propaganda within Libya and abroad. In August 1982 it began printing a fairly sophisticated Arabic-language magazine, *Al-Inqad (Salvation)*, in bimonthly editions of 20,000 copies. The group also publishes a mimeographed newsletter in English, occasional pamphlets, and other materials. [redacted]

The NFSL also broadcasts its material to Libya by radio. The programs focus on Qadhafi's financial maladministration, his "destruction" of Islam, his political repression, and his foreign adventures. The NFSL lost its broadcast site in Sudan—which it had used since September 1982—following the collapse of the Nimeiri regime in April 1985. The group relocated its broadcast operations to Baghdad, until Iraq shut them down in early 1987 when it sought to improve relations with Libya. [redacted]

[redacted] press reports indicate that senior NFSL personnel recently have visited N'Djamena, which suggests that the NFSL has established a transmitter there. [redacted]

The NFSL also prepares a short program, "The Voice of the Libyan People," which is broadcast without attribution over Egyptian radio. [redacted]

The NFSL claims to maintain a paramilitary wing called the Salvation Forces. Details of the size and organization of the forces are fragmentary. [redacted]

[redacted] at least two groups of between 30 and 50 NFSL personnel received paramilitary training—some in Sudan and some in Morocco—between 1981 and 1984. [redacted]

[redacted] some of the commandos received one basic and two advanced paramilitary courses. Allowing for attrition in training and in combat and assuming some recruiting and training continues, we estimate the NFSL's cadre of trained commandos numbers between 50 and 80. [redacted]

It is unclear whether this cadre remains organized. In April 1984 [redacted] the NFSL had infiltrated into Libya three commando teams totaling about 30 men. At least half of this group was lost in the gunbattle with security forces in May 1984, including the founder and leader of the Salvation Forces, Ahmad Ahwas. Any survivors almost certainly fled to avoid being discovered in the broad security sweeps that followed. Since then there have been no paramilitary activities in Libya attributable to the NFSL, suggesting that the Salvation Forces are inactive, if not moribund. [redacted]

The Libyan National Party

The LNP was founded in 1985 by Bashir al-Rabti, the former speaker of the parliament of the defunct Egyptian-Syrian-Libyan union. Although the LNP is not as large or well organized as the NFSL, it may over time challenge the predominance of the NFSL in the exile community. [redacted]

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Various exile publications: (top left) pamphlet by Libyan Constitutional Union; (top right) booklet by National Grouping; (bottom left) Al-Inqad magazine, by NFSL; (bottom right) NFSL newsletter.

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Like the NFSL, the LNP appears to represent primarily middle-class interests, although it does not have the same religious overtones as Maqaryaf's group. [] Rabti claims the LNP has a membership of 400, most of them located in the United States, Egypt, and the United Kingdom, and a few in West Germany. [] most of the leadership of the LNP is made up of businessmen and professionals. Unlike the NFSL, Tripolitarians dominate the LNP leadership. []

In our view, the LNP will play a spoiler role in exile politics. Rabti's generally middle-class orientation could eventually cut into NFSL strength, particularly if the NFSL does not become more active in confronting Qadhafi. [] some disgruntled NFSL members broke with Maqaryaf in 1985 and joined the LNP. We doubt, however, that the predominantly Tripolitanian LNP leadership could build sufficient support in Cyrenaica and Fezzan to allow it to become a genuinely national movement. []

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Abd al-Mun'im al-Huni

We believe that Abd al-Mun'im al-Huni, one of the original coup plotters with Qadhafi and a former senior government official, is the only exile with sufficient stature to be a credible alternative to Qadhafi. Huni, a former member of the Revolutionary Command Council, Foreign Minister, and intelligence chief, went into voluntary exile in Egypt following a 1975 coup attempt. Unlike Maqaryaf and Rabti, he has not founded a formal opposition group. Despite this, Huni is important because of his prestige. []

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Although the LNP competes with the NFSL, we do not believe that it is capable of ousting Qadhafi. In our judgment, the LNP is a long way from developing a capability to carry out paramilitary action inside Libya. []

[] the creation of a "military department" represents LNP intentions rather than capability. []

[] Rabti himself says the LNP is in financial trouble—he is reluctant to accept aid with strings attached from foreign countries—and that its current organization is an interim structure. []

[] in August 1986 antiregime pamphlets were distributed in Libya over Huni's signature. In late 1986 the Egyptian press reported that Huni met with representatives of the major opposition groups to form a united front. He also traveled to Iraq in late 1986 and early 1987, almost certainly to obtain Iraqi support for his efforts. []

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Smaller Opposition Groups

Numerous small Libyan opposition groups operate in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East. Most of their energies since 1980 have been spent on abortive efforts to forge a united front. For example, in October 1985 five small groups met in Houston and agreed to form the Joint National Allied Leadership Committee, with the aim of competing with the NFSL for influence among Libyan exiles. The principal stumblingblocks to exile unity, as suggested by press reporting [redacted], are personal rivalries and political disputes over the form of a post-Qadhafi government. In our judgment, these factors will continue to plague efforts to form exile coalitions. [redacted]

Most of the lesser groups confine their activities to propaganda. The Libyan National Democratic Grouping, Libyan Liberation Organization, Libyan Constitutional Union, and Libyan National Movement sporadically produce magazines, articles, and pamphlets and issue press statements. The Libyan Liberation Organization is primarily a vehicle for former Libyan Prime Minister Bakkush. [redacted]

[redacted] Bakkush circulated propaganda in Libya in the summer of 1986. The Libyan National Movement, primarily a cluster of

Libyan Ba'thists supported by the Iraqi Ba'th Party, used to broadcast on Baghdad Radio. [redacted] 25X1

Although none of the smaller groups have to our knowledge mounted paramilitary operations in Libya, some of them may be responsible for attacks on Libyan personnel and facilities in Western Europe. In January 1984 and again in January 1985, Libyan diplomats associated with antidissident functions were assassinated in Rome. A shadowy group called Al-Burkan (The Volcano) claimed responsibility. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] Al-Burkan is a front for [redacted] 25X1 the Libyan National Struggle Movement. Formerly called the Libyan National Salvation Army, this is a small Cyrenaican group supported by Yasir Arafat's Fatah Palestinian group [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] Another group, 7 April, claimed responsibility for the bombings of the Libyan consulate and airline office in Athens in the fall of 1985, apparently in retaliation for the shooting of a dissident by Libyan agents. The group also announced that it carried out the December 1985 bombing of the Libyan cultural center in Malta. [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

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Huni's prestige—and his ties to senior officers—could prove decisive should the armed forces determine continued rule by Qadhafi is intolerable but cannot agree on one of their own. [redacted]

[redacted] Qadhafi was especially concerned by Huni's leaflets and feared that he would incite unrest. [redacted]

Impact of the Opposition: Talk Is Cheap

Despite a promising beginning, we do not believe the Libyan opposition in exile—especially the NFSL—has lived up to its potential. Although dissident propaganda probably has succeeded in increasing Qadhafi's obsession with his personal security, [redacted] even after several years of organizing and other activity, the exiles have not acquired a sizable following inside Libya. [redacted] 25X1

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Qadhafi to two revolutionaries:
"Find me someone to execute... I'm feeling lethargic."
[redacted]



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In our judgment, the greatest shortcoming of the exiles has been their failure to act at crucial times—such as during the regime infighting in the fall of 1985 or in the immediate aftermath of the US airstrikes in April 1986. We believe that during such times even a small operation inside Libya would have had a significant impact on the stability of Qadhafi's regime. We believe such operations are necessary for the NFSL—or the other groups—to maintain credibility and gain adherents inside Libya, particularly in the armed forces. [redacted] one reason the Libyan populace is unimpressed by the exiles is the lack of concrete activity by those groups. [redacted]

More important, however, has been the personal impact on Qadhafi of opposition propaganda, which has provoked him to undertake rash acts to silence the dissidents and assert his control in the country. [redacted]

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[redacted] the appearance of leaflets in Libya after the US airstrikes was especially worrisome to Qadhafi. His attempt to bomb the NFSL transmitter in Sudan in 1984 and his repeated attempts to kill the vocal Abd al-Hamid al-Bakkush highlight his sensitivity to opposition propaganda. Qadhafi's determination to silence the opposition, in our view, leads him to take increasingly unpopular actions at home—such as public executions. [redacted]

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Propaganda

Despite the opposition's failure to engage in timely, disruptive activities, we believe that its propaganda, especially its radiobroadcasts, leaflets, and cassettes distributed in Libya, has had an indirect impact on the stability of Qadhafi's regime. Such materials focus discontent on Qadhafi and reassure individual Libyans that they are not alone in their dislike of the regime. [redacted]

Paramilitary Operations

In our judgment, antiregime paramilitary operations in Libya have heightened regime insecurity. To the extent that they have raised the level of discontent in Libya, we believe they increase Qadhafi's paranoia and may strengthen the willingness of the officer corps to move against him. The exiles, however, have conducted only one such operation in Libya—the May 1984 gunbattle between NFSL commandos and regime security forces in Tripoli. All other incidents—such as explosions at military facilities in Al Abyar and Mizdah in 1984—apparently have been generated internally. [redacted]

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We judge the NFSL has squandered the considerable momentum it developed following the May 1984 operation. We believe its failure to follow up that incident is a major factor in the continued reluctance of Algeria and Egypt to provide active support to it. If the NFSL had mounted even a small sabotage operation shortly after the killing of Hassan Ashqal in November 1985 or in the immediate aftermath of last year's airstrikes, we believe it would have aggravated those crises and put additional pressure on Qadhafi.

Alternative Prospects for the Opposition

Sustained propaganda and/or paramilitary activity by Libyan dissidents inside Libya almost certainly would hasten the deterioration of Qadhafi's public standing and his support among military officers and civil servants. The regime appears especially exposed in the wake of its defeat in Chad. Even with a sustained program, however, it is unlikely that the Libyan expatriate opposition can remove Qadhafi from power and replace him with a significantly less radical government.

We believe the Army, the security forces, and Qadhafi's own tribe ultimately will be the forces that individually or in coalition will determine the survival of Qadhafi's regime. The security forces include the pervasive revolutionary committees, the Deterrent Forces, and the 2,000-strong elite Jamahiriya Guards, drawn primarily from the Qadhafi and allied tribes. These organizations would have to be co-opted or otherwise overcome by any plotters. For the moment, these forces appear loyal, in large part because they are insulated from the harshness of Qadhafi's foreign and domestic policies. If, however, increasing numbers of these Libyans begin to suffer in combat with Chadian forces, they could find common cause with dissatisfied officers. Alternatively, the added strains of apprehending deserters and watching the armed forces may strain the capabilities of Qadhafi's security forces to discover and thwart antiregime elements. In such a situation, an energized exile campaign could become a significant catalyst in the destabilization of Qadhafi's regime and would enhance the exiles' ability to influence a post-Qadhafi government.

In our analysis, the prospects for the Libyan opposition encompass five possible scenarios, excluding the possibility of a "lone assassin" killing the Libyan leader.

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Increasing Irrelevance

If present trends continue, we believe that this scenario is the most likely outcome of exile activity. It posits a continued inability or unwillingness by the expatriate opposition to conduct operations inside Libya and a resultant stagnation. Such lack of momentum would further erode the exiles' credibility and undermine their ability to gain crucial foreign support. It also would probably lead to greater fragmentation.

Developments that would reinforce the likelihood of this scenario include:

- The death or defection to the regime of a prominent exile leader.
- The refusal of Algeria, Tunisia, or Egypt to permit the dissidents to stage operations from those countries.
- The cessation of Iraqi or other foreign support to the exiles.
- An abortive opposition operation in which the regime inflicts numerous casualties on the dissidents.
- A major increase in oil prices resulting in improved economic conditions in Libya.
- Significant compromises by Qadhafi that help dampen domestic discontent (for example, curbing of revolutionary committee abuses).

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An Irritant but not a Threat

Although we do not believe this scenario is the most likely outcome of present opposition activity, with somewhat greater effort the exiles probably could achieve this level of success. In this case the opposition would be primarily an embarrassment to Qadhafi, capable of propaganda operations but unable to destabilize his regime.

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A reasonably well-organized and active exile movement, however, would be better positioned to influence the outcome of a post-Qadhafi succession. Qadhafi's successors might invite major exile groups back

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to Libya to burnish the legitimacy of a new regime and increase Libya's cadre of trained and educated personnel. The exiles also might be invited back to help unify the country, especially if the successor regime were heavily weighted toward one region and had few representatives from other parts of Libya.

Developments that would improve the prospects for this scenario include:

- Unification, or at least greater coordination, of the major opposition groups.
- Formation of an opposition "government-in-exile."
- Continued or increased opposition access to radio or television transmitters capable of broadcasting to Libya.
- Regular circulation of opposition literature or cassettes inside Libya.
- Defection of a senior regime official to the opposition.
- High-profile opposition activities overseas, such as demonstrations, sit-ins at Peoples' Bureaus, and confrontations with Libyan officials in public forums.

A Major Threat

This is the optimal scenario for the opposition. We believe that it is also the least likely. To produce this outcome the Libyan opposition would have to mount paramilitary operations inside Libya on a sustained and regular basis—we estimate at least one per month. In particular the opposition would have to strike targets identified with the Qadhafi regime—revolutionary committee offices, internal security service facilities, and regime propaganda organs—rather than targets identified with the state, such as armed forces installations. The attacks would have to be fairly visible and coupled with an effective propaganda campaign to increase their impact.

In our judgment, even if the exiles could sustain such a campaign, it would not be sufficient to topple Qadhafi. It would, however, be a major factor contributing to insecurity and instability in Libya. In such an atmosphere, we believe that key Qadhafi tribesmen and regime officials would put distance between themselves and Qadhafi, the security services would become overtaxed, and the armed forces would be emboldened to move against the regime.

We believe the following developments would be necessary to realize this scenario:

- Algeria, Egypt, or Tunisia permit use of their territory for staging opposition operations into Libya.
- One or more of the major exile groups develops a network of cells in Libya capable of supporting a sustained antiregime program.
- Iraq or another foreign sponsor is willing to maintain funding and training of Libyan dissidents.
- The price of oil remains depressed, and economic austerity measures remain in force in Libya.
- Qadhafi refuses to curb the power of the revolutionary committees or reverse unpopular policies such as the intervention in Chad.

An Exile Coup Attempt

This scenario is difficult to assess because a prerequisite for its success is secrecy. In this scenario Huni would serve as both an alternative to Qadhafi around whom disaffected elements could rally and as a broker of foreign support to the coup plotters. Once internal conspirators had removed Qadhafi, Huni could return to lend the new regime some legitimacy while Algeria and/or Egypt moved to shore up the new government.

It is unlikely that even Huni could successfully organize a coup that initially seized the entire country. He would have to depend on foreign support to deter pro-Qadhafi elements from moving against him.

Developments that would enhance the likelihood of the scenario include:

- Huni continues openly to oppose Qadhafi.
- Huni gains the support of at least some members of the security services and the Qadhafi tribe as well as the officer corps.
- Algeria and/or Egypt commit themselves to protect a new military regime from counterattack by pro-Qadhafi forces.
- Qadhafi curbs some of the power of the revolutionary committees, reducing their ability to protect the regime.
- Additional US military action against Libya damages the security apparatus and diminishes confidence in the regime.

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- The Libyan armed forces are made the scapegoats for the defeat in Chad and continue to suffer significant casualties, desertions, and declining morale as a result of Chadian guerrilla actions in the Aozou Strip. []

- Disaffected officers are able to exchange views on the political situation securely among themselves and to organize without discovery by the various security forces. [] 25X1

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An Internal Coup Attempt

This scenario probably is the most difficult to assess both because of the secrecy required for its success and our lack of reliable information on what, if any, organized opposition exists in the armed forces. In this scenario, disaffected officers without links to external forces would move against the regime. As in the scenario involving Huni, it is unlikely that military conspirators could seize the entire country in one blow. At a minimum, they would have to eliminate—by assassination, arrest, or exile—Qadhafi and other senior members of his entourage. They would then have to gain quickly the support of most of the military to overcome the almost certain challenge to their authority by loyalist elements. Their chances of success would increase if the plotters included elements of the Qadhafi tribe. []

Many of the developments that increase the likelihood of an exile coup also apply to an internal putsch. Developments that pertain to an internal coup attempt include:

- Qadhafi commits larger numbers of revolutionary committee personnel and security force units to Chad, where they suffer casualties.
- The continued failure of Qadhafi's policies, particularly those that concern the security of Libya, causes many Libyans to doubt the regime's ability to remain in power and prompts maneuvering among senior officials in anticipation of a succession struggle.
- Austerity measures and revolutionary committee abuses prompt increasingly open opposition by the Libyan public.
- The necessity for defending the Aozou Strip increases armed forces access to ammunition.

Implications for the United States

The impact of Libyan opposition activities on US interests varies with the degree of success the dissidents achieve. If, as we believe, present trends result in a fragmented and ineffective Libyan exile opposition, then US interests will be adversely affected. Qadhafi's prestige will be enhanced by such an outcome, and his confidence—and probably his aggressiveness—is likely to increase. Moreover, Qadhafi has publicly stated—and we believe he is convinced—that exile activities are inspired, supported, and directed by Washington and its Western allies. He almost certainly would regard a victory over the exiles as a victory over the United States, and at a minimum he would portray it as such in Libyan propaganda. [] 25X1

US interests are partly served if the exiles remain an irritant, but not a threat, to the regime. To the extent that the opposition focuses international opinion on the abuses of the regime, it would diminish Qadhafi's prestige and appeal. In addition, if such activity gives the exiles greater influence in a Libyan succession, it would also provide the United States an avenue of influence in post-Qadhafi Libya. There is the risk, however, that continued exile propaganda pressure, even if it does not threaten his hold on power, would provoke Qadhafi and lead to Libyan terrorist retaliation against exiles abroad, including those in the United States. [] 25X1

A scenario that leads to Qadhafi's ouster would be beneficial to US interests, but it is not without risks and disadvantages. A pro-Western government is unlikely to replace Qadhafi's rule in Libya, but almost any successor regime to Qadhafi is likely to be more compatible with US interests. A Huni-led regime would at least be a pragmatic government and something of a known quantity. A regime that emerges from an internal coup would be more unknown and perhaps less secure than one involving Huni, but we believe that any successor will have to address Libya's internal problems and curtail many of Qadhafi's more quixotic adventures abroad. [] 25X1

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On the negative side, Qadhafi's ouster is likely to usher in a period of instability—possibly even civil war—in Libya. Such instability probably would affect countries in the region friendly to the United States, such as Tunisia and Egypt. These countries may be tempted to intervene to influence the succession and could look to Washington to counter Soviet influence in Libya or even to support their intervention. Moreover, such instability could prompt elements in Libya to seek support from Moscow and thus provide an opening for the Soviets to increase their influence in Libya.

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The Bottom Line

The political and economic trends in Libya are running against Qadhafi. The Libyan opposition may yet exploit Qadhafi's vulnerabilities, but only if they can foster the perception that there is an organized resistance to the regime that continues to operate despite Qadhafi's harsh security measures. The longer the exiles delay internal antiregime operations, however, the more likely they will become irrelevant to the stability of the regime.

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